

REMARKS

In the April 7, 2004 Office Action, the specification and claim 9 are objected to for informalities, claims 6 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for being indefinite, and claims 1-10 and 12-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,435,895 to Little et al. Claim 11 was not examined on the merits due to the indefinite language.

By the present amendment, claims 1, 6, 7 and 9 are amended, claim 11 is canceled and new claims 15-17 are added. That leaves claims 1-10 and 12-17 pending in this application with claim 1 being independent. Independent claim 1 is amended to clarify that it is the locking element which releases the plug connector from a locking position with respect to the plug. Dependent claims 6, 7 and 9 are amended to correct minor informalities.

The rejection over Little et al. is respectfully traversed. In particular, Little et al. fails to disclose, teach or suggest a plug connector with a locking element that releases the plug connector from a locking position with a receptacle, as recited in amended claim 1.

Specification

The specification is objected to for labeling “a locking element” and “a base portion” both as reference numeral 20. In response, a replacement paragraph is provided deleting the numeral 20 after “a base portion” on page 6, line 28.

Claim Objection

Claim 9 is objected to for lack of antecedent basis for “the catch means.” In response, claim 9 is amended to correct the dependency to claim 8, which defines the catch means.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claims 6 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. In particular, the Office Action questions the meaning of “the catch arms in the function position of the plug connector and receptacle run parallel to the trunk,” as recited in claim 6 and how “the locking elements comprise a plug arm, which is of such length that in the function position of housing and receptacle, it releases an effective shunt between the contact parts and/or contact and/or contact elements,” as recited in claim 11. The Office Action further indicates that claim 11 could not be examined on the merits.

In response, claim 6 is amended to clarify that when the catch arms are in the locking position of the plug connector and the receptacle, they run parallel to the trunk. Also, claim 11 is canceled. Therefore, Applicant submits that since the indefinite language of claim 6 is corrected and claim 11 is canceled, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is obviated and should thus be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-10 and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,435,894 to Little et al. However, Little et al. fails to disclose a locking element that releases the plug connector from a locking position with a receptacle.

More specifically, Little et al. discloses a plug connector 10 that connects to a socket connector 26. The plug connector 10 of Little et al. includes a cover 14 and a housing 12. A deflectable cover member 122 of the cover 12 has arms 140 and 142 which engage recesses 140a and 142a of latch lugs 150 and 152 of housing latch arms 50 and 52 to latch the cover 14 with respect to the housing 12, as seen in Fig. 2B-2D. Once the housing 12 and the cover

14 are latched, the plug connector 10 can be inserted into the socket connector 26 with ribs 62 and 64 of housing latch arms 50 and 52 engaging a mating groove 66 of socket connector 26 to lock the plug connector 10 with respect to socket connector 26. To withdraw the plug connector 10 of Little et al. from socket connector 26, requires deflection of both the cover member 122 toward the housing 12 to release lugs 150 and 152 from the recesses 140a and 142a of housing latch arms 50 and 52, and the latch arms 50 and 52 toward each other to clear ribs 60 and 62 from the mating recess 66 of socket connector 26, as seen in Fig. 2E. Therefore, the plug connector 10 of Little et al. cannot be released from socket connector 26 without deflecting latch arms 50 and 52 of the housing. In contrast, independent claim 1, as amended, specifically recites that it is the locking element and not the housing that releases the plug connector. Therefore, even if the cover 14 of Little et al. is considered to be the locking element of the claimed invention, because release of the plug connector 10 of Little et al. requires manipulation of latch arms 50 and 52 of the housing, Little et al fails to show a locking element that releases the plug connector.

Since Little et al. does not identically show all of the elements of independent claim 1, particularly a locking element that releases a plug connector from a receptacle, Little et al. fails to anticipate claim 1. As such, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) should be withdrawn and claim 1 allowed.

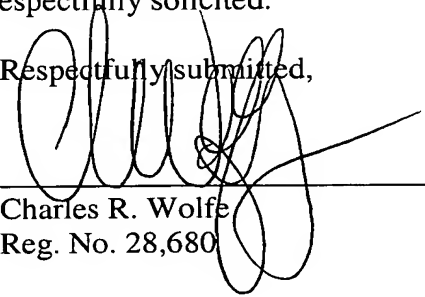
Dependent claims 2-10 and 12-14 are also allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, these claims recite additional features that further distinguish them from the prior art including Little et al. For example, dependent claim 5 recites that the locking arms are movable along slots that are formed in the catch arms. Contrary to the Office Action, the areas between latch arms 50 and 52 and shaft 54 of Little et al. are not slots formed in the latch arms 50 and 52, as recited in claim 5.

New Claims 15-17

New claims 15-17 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons discussed above. In addition, these claims recite other features not found in the prior art including Little et al. New claim 15 recites that only the locking element is actuated to release the catch arms from the recesses of the receptacle. In contrast, the connector of Little et al. requires actuation of both cover member 122 and latch arms 50 and 52 to release the connector. New claim 16 recites that deflecting the locking arms simultaneously deflects the catch arms. The arms 144 and 146 of Little et al. only deflect linearly in response to pressure on deflecting member 122 and do not deflect the latch arms 50 and 52. Instead, the latch arms 50 and 52 of Little et al. can only be deflected by manually pushing them toward each other. New claim 17 recites that the locking element engages the recesses of the receptacle when the plug connector is in the locking position. In contrast, the arms 144 and 146 of Little et al. only engage lugs 150 and 152 of the latch arms 50 and 52. The arms 144 and 146 of Little et al. do not engage any part of socket connector 26.

In view of the foregoing, claims 1-10 and 12-17 are believed to be in allowable condition. Prompt and favorable action is therefore respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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